

Threatened and Endangered Species in Forests of Wisconsin

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SPRUCE GROUSE

(Dendragapus canadensis)

Federal Status: Not Listed

State Status: Threatened



Description: This dark-colored grouse is 15 to 17 inches long. The adult male has a black breast and face. When viewed at close range or through good binoculars, one can see a bright red fold of skin above the eye. The female is a speckled brown. Both the male and female have a rusty brown band along the tip of the tail. It usually shows no fear of human beings; this tame behavior also helps identify the spruce grouse.

Habitat: Boreal coniferous forests (containing white spruce, red pine and balsam fir) in the



northern part of Wisconsin are the primary habitat of the spruce grouse. In the same part of the state, it may also be seen in jack pines or spruce bogs (containing black spruce and tamarack), and feeding in wild blueberry patches.

Forestry Considerations: This grouse utilizes extensive conifer forests, especially black spruce in the lowlands and jack pine in the uplands. In a broad landscape, conifer forests of all classes will ensure long-term habitat needs. Therefore, limited group-selection silviculture is compatible with spruce grouse. Where spruce grouse are found, some dense coniferous forest should be retained for cover and nesting. Lower living branches that touch the ground should be retained. Since black spruce and tamarack appear to be an important element of this bird's habitat, ground-water levels in these areas should not be altered.

